

WALDO, FRANK A.

INTERVIEW

8719

257

BIOGRAPHY FORM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

WALDO, FRANK A. INTERVIEW.

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Field Worker's name: Anna R. Barry

This report made on (date) September 23, 1937 1937

1. Name Frank A. Waldo

2. Post Office Address El Reno

3. Residence address (or location) 1001 South Mock Island Street

4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month October Day 2, Year 1859

5. Place of birth Kansas City, Kansas

6. Name of Father Horatio Waldo Place of birth Massachusetts

Other information about father _____

7. Name of Mother Susan (Smith) Waldo Place of birth Illinois

Other information about mother _____

Notes or complete narrative by the field worker dealing with the life and story of the person interviewed. Refer to Manual for suggested subjects and questions. Continue on blank sheets if necessary and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached _____

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Journalist, Anna R. Barry,
September 23, 1937.

Interview with Frank A. Waldo,
El Reno,
1001 South Rock Island.

Frank A. Waldo was born in Kansas City, Kansas, on October 2, 1859, the son of Horatio Waldo and Susan (Smith) Waldo. During the Civil War Frank Waldo's father worked as a Government Civil Engineer, stationed at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. For several years he worked as an engineer, helping to survey the state of Kansas. Frank Waldo's father homesteaded on a claim fifteen miles west of Leavenworth; the mother and her eleven children held down this claim while the father continued to work at survey work.

Mr. Waldo can still remember when he wore dresses; in those days little boys wore dresses until they were about five years old. These dresses were usually made of calico or homespun cloth made in an apron effect. In length they almost touched the child's ankle. You never saw a boy wear a hat in those days; all children wore

WALDO, FRANK A. INTERVIEW.

8719

-2-

sunbonnets, girls and boys alike. At that time they didn't have factory made clothes. In Winter his mother generally made the boys' caps out of woolen material.

In 1870 on when Frank was a lad of eleven years of age the Waldo family sold their farm in Kansas and moved to the state of Louisiana. But the family just stayed in Louisiana one year this time and in the Fall of 1871 they moved to Sherman, Texas. When he was fourteen years old Frank went to Arkansas City to go to school, he made his home with a sister. At this time Arkansas City had a population of three hundred. This little school he attended was a three room brick schoolhouse, which still stands. All during the time he attended school here Frank Waldo worked as janitor. This school building at this time was considered the best building in Arkansas City and just enough pupils attended this school to occupy one room, which was located on the second floor. It was Frank Waldo's duty to carry wood up these stairs for the wood heater and each day it took from one-half to one cord of wood. For his work he received \$3.00 per month, although he worked just

as hard as the janitors of the schools today who receive around \$80.00 per month for their labor.

In 1875 or when Frank ~~Waldo~~ was sixteen years of age, he set up a little store on the south bank of the Arkansas River. With a \$100.00 plus a good name he managed to arrange enough backing to start his first little store. His customers were home seekers and Indians. It was while he was here that forty wagons of Indians hauling freight were caught in a blizzard. These Indians had run out of rations and horse feed and they came to Frank's store and told him their story. He let them have rations and horse feed and they camped around his store until the storm blew over and they could travel on. Frank sent his bill of \$250.00 to Agent Miles at Darlington and in a few days received his money.

In 1896, when the Santa Fe Railroad was building from Arkansas City into Oklahoma, Mr. Waldo operated a commissary for a man of the name of Decker. This commissary furnished supplies to the railroad hands. It was stationed on the bank of Salt Fork River and the

-4-

town is now called White Eagle. When they first established this commissary, Mr. Decker came down from Kansas to help get the business started. Not far from their store an Indian family was camped of the name of White Eagle. This family could not speak a word of English, but through an interpreter they made this Indian ^{woman} understand that they wanted to board at her camp and that she could get her food out of the store; this she did. At noon when Mr. Waldo and Mr. Decker went down to camp for their dinner, they had a surprise. On the ground there was spread a white table cloth, fine dishes of food, and all during the time they ate this Indian woman brushed the flies back with a bush. After dinner Mr. Waldo asked this interpreter about this Indian woman being such a good cook and so clean and was told that she had worked for years in an Indian Agent's home in Nebraska.

While working at the commissary Mr. Waldo went to Arkansas City and was married to Clara Davis Barnett on October 7, 1886. When Oklahoma opened for settlement in 1889, Mr. Waldo opened up a grocery store in Guthrie on

the day of the Opening, April 22, 1889. This store was known as Andrews, Waldo and Company. The day of the Opening Mr. Andrews and Mr. Waldo staked their lots. They hastily put up a little frame shack and by sundown they were ready for business. That evening it began to rain and a young fellow kept hanging around their store, who finally told Mr. Waldo that he didn't have a place to stay that night, so Mr. Waldo told him he might sleep in the store. The next day this fellow contested their lots and it cost them \$100.00 to get rid of him. The next morning or on April 23, 1889, this store of Andrew, Waldo and Company put on a delivery wagon; it was a cart drawn by a mule and they delivered groceries to restaurants and to the people who flocked there for the Opening, most of whom were located in tents. Mr. Waldo is sure his delivery wagon was the first one put on in the town of Guthrie if not in the whole state. Mr. Waldo continued to operate this store until the Spring of 1892. He then with his family moved to El Reno, coming from Guthrie on the Choctaw railroad.

-8-

Soon after the Waldo family arrived in El Reno, Mr. Waldo engaged in the produce business, handling fruits, vegetables, coal, grain, seed and feed. His first store was located on South Bickford Street about where the Cox Furniture Store is now located. From there he moved to 101 South Choctaw Street, then back to 307 South Bickford Street; the last time he moved his business to 115 South Rock Island Street.

Mr. Waldo is one of El Reno's oldest business men. He has been continuously in business in El Reno for forty-six years. Just a few weeks ago Mr. Waldo sold his business but just as soon as he is rested up and has had a vacation, he expects to be back in business. Mr. Waldo remembers that El Reno boasted only two or three brick buildings when he first came here. He remembers the old Opera house, located on Rock Island Street, the hit and miss board sidewalks, the old hitching rocks, the watering tanks located in the center of the streets, the street sprinkler and the fire cart drawn by hand.

The Waldo family consists of Mr. and Mrs. Waldo and three children, a daughter, Mrs. J. H. Buckles of

WALDO, FRANK A. INTERVIEW.

9719

-7-

Oklahoma City and two sons, N. B. and R. E. Waldo,
owners of the Waldo Alfalfa Mill at El Reno.